

NOT VOTING—3

Booker Tillis Warnock

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 35, Wendy Ruth Sherman, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Chris Van Hollen, Tammy Baldwin, Richard J. Durbin, Thomas R. Carper, Tina Smith, Richard Blumenthal, Ben Ray Lujan, Debbie Stabenow, Ron Wyden, Cory A. Booker, Alex Padilla, Jack Reed, Mark R. Warner, Chris Van Hollen, Robert P. Casey, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Wendy Ruth Sherman, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. WARNOCK) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 145 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Romney
Blumenthal	Kaine	Rosen
Brown	Kelly	Rounds
Burr	King	Sanders
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schatz
Capito	Leahy	Schumer
Cardin	Lujan	Shaheen
Carper	Manchin	Sinema
Casey	Markey	Smith
Collins	Menendez	Stabenow
Coons	Merkley	Tester
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Murphy	Warner
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Feinstein	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wyden
Hassan	Peters	
Heinrich	Portman	

NAYS—42

Barrasso	Graham	Moran
Blackburn	Grassley	Paul
Blunt	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Braun	Hoever	Sasse
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Johnson	Shelby
Cramer	Kennedy	Sullivan
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Toomey
Daines	Lummis	Tuberville
Ernst	Marshall	Wicker
Fischer	McConnell	Young

NOT VOTING—3

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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 42.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Wendy Ruth Sherman, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

GEORGIA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, over the past several weeks, all eyes have been on Georgia and the State legislation that is being considered on voting rights of Georgia's citizens. In response to the new voting restrictions the State's Governor signed into law last month, American leaders from many walks of life responded. It has really brought the issue of voter suppression to the forefront at the beginning of a national debate.

We are told that hundreds—hundreds—of bill changes and amendments are being offered in State legislatures across the country, all modeled after the Georgia goal, the Georgia outline, of reducing the opportunity to vote in America.

If you have a functioning democracy where people actually count votes, the number of people who show up is as important as how they vote, and I think the people in Georgia have realized that with this new approach they are taking. There has been a broad condemnation of the Georgia voting law, and it has inspired a display of unity in support of our fundamental right to vote across America. It seems that some of my Republican colleagues would rather silence the law's critics than address the very real issues that the law creates.

Over the recess, the minority leader, Senator McCONNELL, issued a warning to the leaders of corporations who were voicing their opposition to the Georgia law. He said to them: You stay out of politics. He apparently did not say "Keep your money out of politics" because he has been a fan of the Citizens United decision, which gives those same corporations not only the opportunity but the experience of spending millions of dollars in every election cycle to affect the outcome.

I appreciate the Republican leader's newfound passion for addressing the in-

fluence of big corporations, but rather than silencing leaders in the private sector from speaking their minds, which is their constitutional right, I would invite my Republican colleagues to join Democrats in taking more meaningful steps to protect our political system from corporate overreach.

They can join us if they wish in supporting the For the People Act, the democracy defense bill. The For the People Act would limit the influence of dark money and special interests in our politics, require big money contributors and special interests to actually drop the veil and show us who they are, and tighten the rules that affect the super PACs. It is a commonsense solution for protecting every American's First Amendment right to free speech, and it would level the playing field of the political system so that everybody has an equal say.

I would also invite my Republican colleagues to revive the bipartisan spirit of the Voting Rights Act. I can remember a time when renewal of the Voting Rights Act was a virtually unanimous bipartisan effort. Unfortunately, that changed, and the Supreme Court decision didn't make it any easier. So we are trying with the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to return to the days of bipartisanship in addressing the issue of race and politics. It is especially important given the scourge of voter suppression laws we have seen in State legislatures across the country, Georgia being the most recent example.

This new Georgia law isn't new at all. It emerges from the playbook that is over 120 years old. It goes all the way back to the 1890s, when Reconstruction was followed by the Jim Crow era in the South, with the creation of something known as the Mississippi Plan. Historian Dr. Carol Anderson, who teaches at Emory University, has referred to the Mississippi Plan, a template of State law, as "a dizzying array of poll taxes, literacy tests, understanding clauses, newfangled voter registration rules, and 'good character' clauses—all intentionally racially discriminatory but dressed up in the genteel garb of bringing 'integrity' back to the voting booth."

A politician who sought to replicate the Mississippi Plan in the State of Virginia noted that their goal—he was very blunt in what he said—noted their goal was to "[eliminate] every [Black] voter who can be gotten rid of, legally, without materially impairing the numerical strength of the white electorate."

Today's voter restrictions might not involve poll taxes, literacy tests, or counting the number of beans in a jar, but like the laws passed during the Jim Crow era, Georgia's new voting law is a deliberate effort to suppress voters, particularly voters of color. There is no other way to describe it when the law includes provisions that make it harder for Georgians to vote.

Let me give you some examples. I read an article last week in the New

York Times, April 11. Nick Corasaniti and Reid Epstein did an analysis, page by page, of what the Georgia law would do, and it was pretty clear why they did it. President Biden won Georgia by just 11,779 votes—11,779—out of 5 million.

The new law that has been proposed and has been signed by the Governor of Georgia will curtail ballot access for voters in booming urban and suburban counties, home to many Democratic voters.

Another provision makes it a crime—a crime—to offer water to voters waiting in line. Of course, those waiting in line tend to be in densely populated communities and largely minority communities.

Some of the things that the Georgia law will do:

Voters will now have less time to request absentee ballots.

Georgia has cut by more than half the period during which voters can request an absentee ballot, from . . . six months . . . to less than three.

This will most certainly reduce the number of people [seeking] absentee ballots and the number of people who actually vote. In the last Presidential election—

And this is the key sentence that defines the goal of the Georgia legislation.

In the last Presidential election, 1.3 million Georgians—about 26 percent of the state's electorate—voted with absentee ballots. Of those who returned absentee ballots last year in 2020, 65 percent voted for [Joe] Biden and 34 percent chose Donald J. Trump.

Do you understand why the Republican legislature wants to put an end to the absentee ballot?

The shorter window will limit opportunities for get-out-the-vote efforts and put strain on new local election boards, which . . . have less time to process ballots.

There are strict new ID requirements for absentee ballots.

Previously, Georgia law required voters to simply sign their absentee ballot applications. Now they . . . have to provide a number from a driver's license or an equivalent state-issued identification. This is virtually certain to limit access.

It is now illegal [under the new Georgia law] for election officials to mail out absentee ballot applications to all voters.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit last year, Georgia's [Republican] secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, . . . mailed absentee ballot applications to every registered voter in the state ahead of its June primary. This led to absentee voting by record numbers of Georgians.

When Mr. Raffensperger didn't mail applications again for the general election, several local government agencies did so, particularly in Georgia's large urban counties.

This is a move that is now being made illegal by the law created by the legislature and signed by Governor Kemp.

With the loss of automatically mailed applications, some voters will invariably not request a ballot, since the application served as a reminder to people that were eligible to vote.

Keep in mind, it wasn't the ballot that was sent without solicitation; it was an application that had to be returned by the voter before they actually received the ballot. It was a re-

minder, one that the Georgia legislature would like to drop.

Speaking of dropping, "drop boxes still exist for absentee ballots . . . but barely."

For the 2020 election in Georgia, there were 94 drop boxes across the four counties that make up the core of metropolitan Atlanta: Fulton, DeKalb—

They pronounce it "DeKab"; we call it "DeKalb."

—and Gwinnett.

The new law limits the same 4 counties to a total of 23 drop boxes, from 94 to 23. And it won't just be fewer drop boxes to deposit your ballot. "Instead of 24-hour access outdoors, the boxes [are] placed indoors at government buildings and early-voting sites and will thus be unavailable for voters to drop off their ballots" in the evening and nonbusiness hours, which means more reliance on mail and the uncertainty of that.

With mobile voting centers—as they say in the New York Times, think about "an RV where you can vote"—"more than 11,200 people voted at the two vehicles at Fulton County in the last election." These vehicles traversed the county during voting periods, effectively bringing polling sites to people. "Georgia has now outlawed this practice."

Under the Georgia law, early voting has expanded at a lot of small counties but not the most populous ones. The strict rules will affect Georgians who actually work traditional hours for a living. They will have less flexible schedules and fewer opportunities to vote.

I spoke to you about the single greatest outrage:

Offering food and water for voters waiting in line now risks [criminal] misdemeanor charges.

Long lines for voting in Georgia are an unfortunate reality, and are often found in the poor, densely populated communities that tend to vote Democratic. During the primary election last June, when temperatures hovered above 80 degrees with high humidity, multiple voting locations across the State had lines in which voters waited more than two hours.

Now they will be denied access to water and food.

If you go to the wrong polling place [under the new Georgia law], it will be . . . harder to vote.

It put strict requirements there.

If election problems arise, a common occurrence, it is now more difficult [even in court] to extend voting hours.

With a mix of changes to vote-counting, high-turnout elections will probably mean long, long waits for results.

And we remember what happened last year when, during that period of calculating, President Trump went to town with all sorts of bizarre theories rejected by scores of courts as to voter fraud that never was found.

Election officials can no longer accept third-party funding, (a measure that nods to rightwing conspiracy theories) [that President Trump is also peddling].

With an eye toward voter fraud, the state attorney general [manages] an election hotline.

The Republican-controlled legislature has more control over State Election Board.

The secretary of state, for his audacity in challenging Trump's vote fraud theories, has been officially removed as a voting member of the State election board by the legislature in Georgia.

The GOP-led legislature is empowered to suspend county election officials.

The bottom line is this: The Georgians didn't waste any time taking a look at the voting results where they lost two Senate seats for the first time in history and decided that they had to change the rules. Too many voters showed up, the wrong voters, so they decided to change the rules and make it more difficult for those, particularly minority, voters who wanted to come and express themselves by the right to vote.

So the question now is, What are we going to do about it? Well, the a local chamber of commerce, Coca-Cola, Delta Air Lines, and others have made it clear that this is an outrage. It is one that we shouldn't countenance or accept in the 21st century.

This, unfortunately, was an exercise in the 19th century to reenslave African Americans after the Civil War. Sadly, vestiges of that continued, right up until the 1960s when the new Civil Rights Act ended up banning some of the most outrageous conduct that came out of the Jim Crow era.

Now the Republican Party nationally, the Georgia Republican Party, the Governor, and the legislature have decided to return to those days. What a sad commentary it is on Mr. Lincoln's Republican Party.

It was embarrassing enough as a Democrat to realize that the earliest stages of Jim Crow were created, conceived, and enforced by the Democrats of their day. For the Republicans, they fought that effort, as they should, in the name of Lincoln and what he brought to their party nationally. Now, today, the tables have turned 180 degrees. It is the Democrats who are trying to bring to the public's attention what is happening in Georgia and in other States. It is sad that the Republicans have decided that the only way to win an election is to control the vote, that their ideas can't be sold anymore to voters across this country.

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH WEEK

Madam President, no community in America has been spared from the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide, we have lost nearly 570,000 mothers, fathers, grandparents, neighbors, and friends. In Illinois, the number is 21,000.

Like so many other diseases and health conditions, the pandemic has inflicted disproportionate harm on communities of color: Black Americans, Native Americans, and members of the Latinx community. Sadly, these disparities come as no surprise. America has a long history of medical inequality. From premature births to premature deaths, people of color suffer disproportionately in America's troubled health system. People of color in